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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

MONDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2005

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BRIEFING

Bush Sends Turkey Republic Day Message: 'The United States and Turkey share a strong commitment to freedom and democracy. Our two countries have cooperated on the global war on terror and stand together to advance freedom and peace throughout the region,' President Bush said in a message to President Sezer to mark October 29, Turkish Republic Day, Saturday papers reported. 'The United States also congratulates Turkey on the start of accession talks with the European Union. This milestone is a tremendous success for the people of Turkey, Europe, and the United States. Turkey's reform efforts over the last decade on human rights, the rule of law, and free market economies reflect Mustafa Kemal Ataturk's vision of a progressive and free democracy, anchored in Europe, and at peace with its neighbors,' President Bush wrote.

Wilson a Realist, not a Neo-Con: Ross Wilson, former US Ambassador to Baku and nominated by President Bush to Turkey, is described by those who know him as 'hard-working and resourceful as well as a cool, professional diplomat,' Monday's "Milliyet" reports from Washington. 'Both Edelman and Wilson, having worked in Moscow during the Soviet era, played an important part in backing democratic freedoms,' said a colleague who had worked with both diplomats.

American, European, and Azerbaijani sources described Wilson as an 'intellectual and a pragmatist.' Wilson holds an MA from Columbia University after having graduated from the department of International Relations in Minnesota in 1977. He entered the Foreign Service in 1979. During some parts of his 25 years of career, which has been on an 'upward curve,' Wilson has focused on economy and trade issues. He is known as an 'economy diplomat' and an expert on Eurasia and security issues. Wilson, who holds a second MA degree from the National War Academy, speaks Russian and Czech. His wife Margo Squire, a career diplomat with expertise on

Eurasia, is expected to take an active position at the US Embassy in Ankara.

Wilson said that when he went to Moscow in 1980, US -Russia ties were tense. 'I was also in Moscow during the Gorbachev period from 1987-90. During my second stay, the Russians were talking to us, they were consulting us,' Wilson said. Wilson told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2000 that 'serving behind the Iron Curtain for seven years made me better realize the value of freedom and liberalism. Democracy, the respect for human rights, and a system of law are indispensable components of a free nation.' An Azerbaijani source praised Wilson for his 'very successful' tenure in Baku. The source said that Wilson had brought 'a fresh breeze' to the US Embassy there after his predecessor, Stanley Escudero, had drawn an enormous reaction for supporting the Aliyev family at the expense of the Azerbaijani opposition: 'Wilson was brilliant, pragmatic and cool-headed. He established the necessary ties with the opposition and developed a constructive relationship with Haydar Aliyev. He also established a good dialogue with the independent press. Wilson improved the image of the United States.' A Turkish diplomat expects Wilson to show 'a special interest' in Turkey's ties with Russia, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and the Turkic republics. Wilson, who visited Yerevan during his term in Baku, is likely to emphasize the US position in favor of Azeri-Armenian rapprochement. An Azerbaijani observer said that Wilson is not from the 'neo-con' group, but that he is a 'moderate intellectual in the style of traditional American diplomacy.'

Talat in the US: Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat, in Washington for talks, said that the Turkish Cypriots now have a vision for a solution in Cyprus, and that this is why US Secretary of State Rice invited him to the United States. Talat said that the isolation of northern Cyprus will be eliminated over time, though not in the near term, thanks to the solution policy his government is pursuing. Talat said he asked the US to continue moves to end the isolation of Turkish Cypriots and to encourage other countries and international organizations to do the same. State Department Spokesman Sean MacCormack said that such meetings 'help to reduce economic differences between Turkish and Greek Cypriots by easing the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots in a way that supports reunification of the island.' Meanwhile, Douglas Silliman, Director of the Office of Southeast Europe Affairs at the State Department, said that the United States is 'doing everything it can' to ease the isolation. No progress has been made, however, on the issue of direct flights to northern Cyprus or upgrading the status of the US mission in the north. Silliman noted that Talat had not been received as 'president,' because the United States does not recognize the 'TRNC.' He added that the US continues to support a solution process for Cyprus within the framework of the UN plan, the next steps in the process will depend on the two sides and the UN. In response to a question, Silliman noted that 'Mr. Talat deserves respect' for his approach. 'We are trying to show him the respect he deserves.' Talat said that the UK has succeeded in getting accession talks started between Turkey and the EU, but that its role as a guarantor power in Cyprus has been 'unsuccessful.' Talat denied claims that the United States wants to open a military base in northern Cyprus. Talat flew to New York after wrapping up meetings in Washington. He will meet with UNSYG Annan on Monday and with UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis at breakfast in New York on Tuesday. Meanwhile, a Turkish Cypriot delegation led by Fatma Ekenoglu, 'Parliament Speaker of the TRNC,' left for Washington on Sunday to participate in a panel discussion to be held by the Turkish Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (TUSIAD) on November 2.

MFA Disapproves Ahmadinejad's Israel Remarks: Turkish Foreign Ministry (MFA) Spokesman Namik Tan said on Friday that Turkey does not approve of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's recent statement with regard to Israel. 'We follow developments on this issue from the international and Iranian media. Naturally, it is impossible for Turkey to approve of such a statement,' Tan stressed, adding that 'Turkey believes that conflicts in the region can only be solved through dialogue and peaceful means on the basis of international legitimacy.'

Democracy Seminars for KDP Officials: Ankara is to continue its support for Iraqi Kurdish groups as part of its contribution to the restructuring of Iraq, the all-news channel NTV reported on Friday. Ahead of national elections in Iraq on December 15, Ankara is staging a series of seminars on democracy to a delegation of 30 party administrators from the northern Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP.) Cafer Ibrahim Haci, a senior member of the KDP delegation, said that they would like to establish similar institutions to those in Turkey in Iraq. The delegation said that they see the Turkish democracy as a model for their country.

PKK a Threat for Iraq: : "Milliyet" reports that Robert Deutsch, advisor to the US Secretary of State on Iraq, told Turkish journalists on Friday that 'The US position against the PKK is clear: the PKK is a terrorist organization.' President Barzani does not take issue with this view. We talked about this issue with Barzani here this week, and this isn't the first time. We have discussed the PKK issue with him and with other Iraqi leaders at the highest levels of the US Government. The Government of Iraq describes the PKK as a terrorist organization, and Barzani is representative of that view. In the past, the IKDP has fought alongside Turkish forces against the PKK.' Asked about the treatment Barzani received in Washington, Deutsch said that 'the constitution that has gone into effect in Iraq officially recognizes the Kurdistan Regional Administration and the region's institutions. It also provides for the election of a president by the regional parliament. Mesud Barzani is this elected President.' Asked whether US forces would seek to apprehend PKK suspects in Iraq, Deutsch said 'Turkey has given the names of many PKK members to Interpol. We also have these names, as do Iraqi forces and coalition forces in Iraq. There is an existing agreement between Turkey and Iraq for the exchange of criminals. If someone is caught in Iraq, an extradition request can be made to the Iraqi authorities.' According to "Cumhuriyet," Deutsch said that the PKK is 'a terrorist organization and a threat for Iraq.' He added that the mountains in northern Iraq did not lend themselves to the launch of a military operation against the terrorist organization. He noted that Turkey was unable to eliminate the PKK by sending tens of thousands of troops into northern Iraq in 1990s, and added that a quick military operation would not be sufficient to combat the PKK. Deutsch also said that Barzani and US officials had agreed on the importance of Iraq having positive relations with Turkey.

Turks Press US Officials on Kurdish Flags at Habur: "Sabah" reports today that at a recent trilateral meeting among Turkish, Iraqi, and US officials at Habur to discuss routine border control issues, the Turkish side pressed the US to force the Iraqis to take down Kurdish flags on the Iraqi side of the Habur border gate. When US officials said they would not get involved in a dispute over the flag issue, several Turkish officials reportedly walked out of the meeting. "Sabah" notes that the Kurdish flags have been in place at Habur since the beginning of the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Ozkok Warns Separatists, Fundamentalists: Chief of the Turkish General Staff (TGS) Hilmi Ozkok told reporters at the Republic Day reception held at the Presidential Palace that some in Turkey were 'testing the patience of the military.' 'These groups are using the Internet to wage a campaign against the Turkish military. Their messages are spreading, and this is worrisome. On Massoud Barzani being received at the White House as 'President' of the Iraqi Kurdish region, Ozkok said: 'We used to see him as a tribal chief. Now, Talabani is the president and Barzani holds a different position. We must accept that things have changed. If Talabani comes to Turkey tomorrow he will come as a head of state. How will we behave then? If we recognize Iraq, we will act in accordance with these changing circumstances.' Ozkok also commented on the statement by Iran's President Ahmadinejad that Israel should be wiped off the map. 'We feel more secure to the extent that our neighbors are more democratic.'

Turkish Nationalists Want Greek Orthodox Patriarchate Out: Some 200 protesters marched at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Istanbul on Friday, kicking off a campaign by Turkish nationalist groups to have the patriarchate transferred to Greece, weekend papers report. Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I said on Sunday that the nationalist actions against the Ecumenical Patriarchate targeted Turkey's European course and Prime Minister Erdogan, who wants to take the country into the EU. 'The place of the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been here for the past 17 centuries. No one has the right to drive the Ecumenical Patriarchate from its historic seat. This is a truth confirmed by time and history. We are on the side of the Patriarch and we defend justice and truth,' the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Greece said.

Israel Warns Tourists During Travel to Turkey: Israel's "Yediot Aharonot" daily warned travelers to Turkey on Friday that warnings have been received to the effect that terrorists will try to place bombs in Israeli tourists' luggage before they board airplanes in Turkey. Security officials said that terrorist organizations may try to bribe hotel employees in Turkey to give them access to secure rooms to put explosives in Israelis' luggage. Israeli tourists recently returning from Turkey underwent thorough security checks at the airport. 'In any case, it is preferable to stay with your suitcase and not to give it to any unknown person,' said officials, 'not even to a

bellboy.' Several months ago, the Israeli counterterrorism office issued a travel warning regarding a portion of the Turkish coast in the wake of information about an al-Qaida cell planning to blow up an Israeli cruise liner. The warning was lifted after Turkish security forces broke up a terrorist cell in Antalya.

Belgium to Hand Over Terror Suspects to Turkey: Justice Minister Cemil Cicek said that Belgium will soon hand over Fehriye Erdal, the suspected assassin of prominent Turkish businessman Ozdemir Sabanci, and Nuriye Kesbir, a high-level PKK militant, to Turkey, "Aksam" reported on Sunday. Cicek said that Turkey's perseverance had produced results, and that US pressure had helped change attitudes in Belgium and the Netherlands.

Independent MP Joins AKP: Independent lawmaker Naci Aslan joined the ruling AK Party on Saturday, increasing the number of AKP seats in parliament to 356. Aslan had recently resigned from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP). The following is the current distribution of seats in parliament: AKP 356, CHP 154, ANAP 22, SHP 4, DYP 4, HYP 1, Independent 5, Vacant 4.

Terrorists, Soldier Killed in Fighting in Southeast Turkey: One soldier died and three terrorists were killed in fighting between security forces and terrorists in the eastern province of Bingol, papers report. One terrorist was arrested in Midyat in the southeastern city of Mardin. Meanwhile, PKK militants staged an attack against the BOTAS (Pipeline Transportation Corp.) pipeline in the town of Nusaybin (Mardin province), causing a fire on the pipeline.

EDITORIAL OPINION: White House; US-Cyprus

"Difficult Days for the President"
Washington-based Omer Taspinar commented in the liberal-intellectual "Radikal" (10/31): "It seems that second terms are never easy for US presidents, and Bush is no exception. President Bush is dealing with a serious crisis, just as his predecessors Nixon, Reagan, and Clinton were forced to do in their second terms. Things started to go wrong for George Bush during the first year of his second term. Washington is currently being rocked by one crisis after another, and people around town are wondering how tough the next three years will be for the current administration. The White House, which had not yet recovered from the Katrina hurricane, has experienced another serious political blow. The Libby indictment is possibly the administration's worst crisis in terms of its timing and symbolic importance. People learned about these charges, which relate to the non-existent weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, only a day later after hearing that the death toll for American soldiers in Iraq surpassed the 2,000 mark. . The other crisis in Washington is the withdrawal of the candidacy of Harriet Miers for the Supreme Court. This is being interpreted as a sign that President Bush has lost his decision-making capability and his political reflexes. All of this means that there are three troublesome years ahead for this administration in Washington. . There is, however, another aspect of this crisis which might be useful for those who engage in conspiracy theories. Why do you think those ill-intentioned neo-cons did not take some uranium into Iraq and plant it there? The answer lays in the fact that, regardless of the situation, the rule of law still prevails in the United States."

"Talat's Different Style in Washington"
Yasemin Congar wrote in the mainstream daily "Milliyet" from Washington (10/31): "Last week Washington saw the reassuring style of Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat. Evaluating Talat's Washington visit, State Department Southeast Europe Director Douglas Silliman said that Talat's positive attitude for a solution in Cyprus will open the way for a political solution. Silliman explained Talat's approach in the following supportive terms: 'We consider the lifting of the isolation as a positive element toward a solution. The UN General Secretary also believes that lifting the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots is part of finding a solution to the Cyprus issue. Moreover, we believe that it will be much easier for the island to merge as one state in the future if we can reduce the economic inequality between the northern and southern parts of the island.' Within this framework, the US is taking various steps. The US has started a financial assistance program to northern Cyprus. The US has also encouraged business relations with northern Cyprus. It is possible that some US companies could invest in the 'TRNC' soon.' From the political angle, US officials say that official visits to northern Cyprus and meetings with high-level 'TRNC officials' will continue and increase."